

University of Massachusetts Boston
Asian American Studies Program



Graduation Celebration
2020-2021

21 May 2021

Asian American Studies Program Affiliated Faculty – May 2021

Ping-Ann Addo, Associate Professor, Anthropology
Pratyush Bharati, Professor, Management Science and Information Systems, College of Management
Elora Chowdhury, Professor and Chair, Women's and Gender Studies
Patrick Clarkin, Associate Professor, Anthropology
Christopher S. Fung, Senior Lecturer, Anthropology
Richard Hung, Associate Professor, School for the Environment
Denise Khor, Assistant Professor, American Studies
Peter Kiang, Professor and Director, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, CEHD
Marlene Kim, Professor, Economics
Haeok Lee, Professor, College of Nursing & Health Sciences
Andrew Leong, Associate Professor, Philosophy and Law
Raymond Liu, Professor and Chair, Marketing, College of Management
Lusa Lo, Associate Professor, Special Education Program, Curriculum & Instruction, CEHD
Rajini Srikanth, Professor, English; Founding Dean, Honors College
Lakshmi Srinivas, Associate Professor, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, CEHD
Karen Sugemoto, Professor, Psychology & Asian American Studies
Shirley Tang, Professor, Asian American Studies, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, CEHD
Kim Soun Ty, Lecturer, Asian American Studies
Ngoc-Tran Vu, Lecturer, Asian American Studies
Leslie Kim Wang, Associate Professor, Sociology
Paul Watanabe, Professor, Political Science and Director, Institute for Asian American Studies
Zong-guo Xia, Professor, School for the Environment
Wenfan Yan, Professor, Department of Leadership in Education, CEHD

The Program

For nearly thirty-five years, UMass Boston's Asian American Studies Program has offered intellectually-challenging, emotionally-engaging, culturally-responsive, culturally-sustaining instruction in the classroom with holistic, high-impact practices of mentoring, community-building, service-learning, and advocacy to address the social and academic needs of students as well as the critical capacity-building needs of local Asian American communities. The program offers the most Asian American Studies courses, faculty, and community linkages of any university in New England. The program's alumni include teachers, social workers, health care providers, business entrepreneurs, and leaders of local Asian American community organizations. By grounding our curriculum, teaching, and applied research in the realities of local Asian American communities and by respecting the knowledge and bilingual/bicultural skills that many UMass Boston students bring to the classroom, the AsAmSt Program creates powerful learning environments for all students to gain critical understandings about the historical experiences, voices, contemporary issues, and contributions of diverse Asian populations in the U.S. Graduate students from any area who have Asian American Studies interests can serve as teaching/research assistants, mentors to undergraduates, and special project developers for the program. AANAPISI students from Bunker Hill Community College and those from partnering pre-collegiate and community youth programs are encouraged to access AsAmSt's learning opportunities. Community members and organizations as well as alumni participate in our activities in many short- and long-term ways. Since 2010, UMass Boston has been the only research university in New England designated and funded by the U.S. Department of Education as an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI).

Celebrating our 2020-2021 Graduates in Asian American Studies

With pandemic persistence, seven resilient undergraduates—Kira I. Relia Arzadon, Yayin He (何雅茵), Cara Gee Lew, Danny Thien Mai, Jaely Cailin Pereira, Zhihang Wen (文志航), and Jin Weng (翁锦润)—remained remotely connected to finish six or more AsAmSt courses and all program-of-study requirements in Asian American Studies. A total of 132 students have now completed AsAmSt concentrations since 2000. We additionally recognize four dedicated graduate students, including three UMB undergraduate AsAmSt alumni, who completed their master's degrees while contributing to various AsAmSt curriculum, teaching, and research projects: Parmita Gurung (पारमीता गुरुड), Nao Hang-Robertson, Pratna Kem, and Alyssa Jasmine Moir. We offer much overdue optimism and continuing care to these ten featured students and to all 2020-2021 graduating students who have experienced Asian American Studies at UMB.

We wish safety, security, and solidarity as well as justice and peace to all AsAmSt students, faculty, staff, alumni, community partners, and donors, and to IAAS, AASSP, SGISD/CEHD, and our AANAPISI allies. The cover photo of beloved alumnae Kim-Dung Nguyen and Marylou Francisco—who took our earliest AsAmSt courses in the late 1980s—documents the April 2021 Fight Anti-Asian Hate rally in Quincy, MA.



Finally, with too many losses of friends and colleagues as well as family and community members during the past year, we particularly note the passing of two tenured Asian American faculty members who were each affiliated with the Asian American Studies Program throughout their long and distinguished careers: Xiaogang Deng, Associate Professor of Sociology, in January 2021, and Sari Kawana, Professor of Japanese Language, in October 2020. Drawn to UMass Boston's urban public mission, they were each part of a vital generation of Asian immigrant faculty who contributed in generous and inspiring ways to our collective scholarship, teaching, and service commitments. We remember and honor them, among so many.

Program-of-Study in Asian American Studies

Kira I. Relia Arzadon

I came to UMB as a biochemistry major on the pre-med track. When I realized that there was an area of study that could help me realize why I felt so pressured to become a successful doctor, everything changed. I realized that my anxiety during every exam, my reluctance to ask questions in the lab, and my overall lack of confidence in my intelligence weren't normal but I assumed I was just struggling to find motivation like most of my peers. When I took my first Anthropology course, my throat was sore the next day from how much I had spoken. My usual silence in every class was now contested by my bi-weekly "People and Cultures in MesoAmerica" class. I only wanted more but wasn't ready to change my major out of fear that my parents would judge me. When I found the Asian American Studies Program and took my first class in this course of study which was "Asian Women in the U.S.," I slowly started to accept that my mother wouldn't have sacrificed all that she did in order to come to America for her daughters to not do what made them happy. So, I changed my major to Anthropology in my junior year and took every Asian American Studies course I could.



As a Filipina American, I find that even though I took as many classes in the department as I could, few classes focused on my history, so I quickly learned that if I wanted to learn more about myself, I had to either research myself, which was boring, or find the someone in my class who might be able to fill the holes in my knowledge about Southeast Asian cultures and histories. I learned that my favorite type of learning was from my peers in these classes and that helped me be open to not only a new way of learning, but also helped me realize that my creativity in this regard could be used. I first started a podcast called "Don't call me Asian" where I explained the lack of understanding of the word "Asian" based on my own

internalized racism and racist experiences. Then I self-directed, edited, and shot a series of videos based on Asian American stereotypes and the fetishization of Asian women called “Normal Girl.” I followed that video with another called “good days” where I tried to tackle themes such as the appropriation of Black culture and the importance of fighting for proper Black representation in all spaces.

I wouldn't be in the position I am now working on my third video if it weren't for the community I found in the Asian American Studies Program. Thank you to everyone in my classes and everyone else in this Program because we are doing the work that our ancestors fought for us to be able to have. I am forever grateful to my peers, my mentors, and my family. A special thanks to Dr. Lauren Sullivan, Prof. Daniela Balanzategui, Prof. Anna Blaschke, Dr. Mridula Satyamurti, Dr. Shirley Tang, Prof. Peter Kiang, Prof. Minjin Kim, and my mom Estrella Arzadon.

Yayin He (何雅茵)

My name is Yayin He which is written as 何雅茵 in Chinese, and my English name is Sophia. I moved to the U.S with my family from China in 2013, after fifteen years of waiting for our immigration visas to be finally approved. I was 19 years old when I just arrived in the U.S. I had almost graduated from High School in China, but I hadn't finished my Senior year before I moved to the U.S. Because of the language barriers, I decided to take over again the four-years of high school in the U.S.

Thanks to community youth programs like Chinese Progressive Association (CPA), Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Association (BCNC), and especially BCNC's Chinese Immigrant Student Leadership (ChISL) program based at Charlestown High School in Boston, I adjusted, made friends with other Chinese immigrant students, and developed leadership skills which made me feel connected and motivated to finish and go on for higher education.



But college was different. I felt isolated and quickly got discouraged. I decided to include a focus on Asian American Studies in my studies at UMass Boston because AsAmSt brought me back to myself and gave me a sense of belonging. I felt less motivated after I started college, until my second year when I took Dr. Shirley's AsAmSt 498 Teaching & Learning in Asian American Studies class on Chinese bilingual storytelling. This was my favorite course overall of all four years of college, and I have many good memories from that class. More importantly, I felt motivated for school again ever since. From then on, I decided to do the program-of-study in Asian American Studies at UMass Boston.

I see my future plans as working in Accounting or something related to the management field. If possible, I would like to work part-time or volunteer in an Asian/Chinese community-based organization in the Boston area, as the way to stay involved with Asian American Studies work wherever I go in the future.

Cara Gee Lew



I am a Chinese American first-generation college student, born in Boston and raised in Quincy, with Chinese immigrant parents. When I was younger, my parents worked full-time, so my grandma would take care of my sisters and me during the day. I didn't grow up in the most diverse environment which has impacted me a lot. It was not until I came to UMass Boston and discovered the Asian American Studies Program where I was able to learn more about Asian American culture, history, and most importantly: myself. I majored in Sociology, minored in English, and completed the program-of-study in Asian American Studies.

I didn't know that UMass Boston had an Asian American Studies Program. But thankfully, my advisor, Frances Van Pelt, recommended me taking ASAMST 370 with Shirley Tang. Taking that class allowed me to learn more about myself as well as reflect. The environment in that class was very

welcoming and supportive. At the end of that semester, Shirley asked if I was interested in having Asian American Studies as a program-of-study. After some time to think about it, I filled out the paperwork and handed it in. I never looked back. I took classes where I got to learn and relate, too—something I had never experienced before in past school experiences. For me, when taking my AsAmSt classes, it's not about what grade I get, it's about the stories I get to listen to and learn from.

When I first entered UMass Boston, I wanted to become a social worker. I still do, but now I also want to become a teacher one day—my dream job when I was little. I am currently interning/volunteering at Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC) in the Family Services department where I am currently interacting with kids through reading and sharing books that have representation, that enable them to see themselves on the pages—something I did not have when I was their age. With the lessons and stories I learned from Asian American Studies, I want to help and teach others about the Asian/Asian American history that has been overlooked throughout everyone’s education and help others whose voices are being ignored.

Danny Thien Mai

I am a second-generation Vietnamese son of refugees. I have lived in the Greater Boston area, specifically the city of Malden, my whole life. I am graduating from UMass Boston with a Bachelor’s degree in Social Psychology and a Program-of-Study in Asian American Studies.

Growing up, I had no sense of direction of what I wanted to do and, to be honest, I am still searching for the most part. When I first entered college, I was undecided for two years until I decided to declare my major. The reason why I chose Social Psychology instead of just Psychology was because I also enjoyed learning about the sociology of people and why people act or behave in certain ways in society or in groups.

I am currently working in three positions. One is as an Asian American research assistant where I assist with data input and finding research on Asian American Women and the pay wage gap. My next role is being a mentor with the Asian American Student Success Program (AASSP), where I help give guidance to my mentees about their academic and social life. Lastly, I work as a delivery driver for a contemporary Asian Fusion restaurant on the weekends.

My direction is still unclear to me right now, but I have a hopeful future ahead regardless. As I grow older mentally, it will all come to me. What I learned from others and am still learning is to take things day by day, to not force anything, and let whatever or whoever is going to come into my life to come to me.



I first became interested in the Asian American Studies Program after my sister, who also graduated with an AsAmSt Program-of-Study, suggested that I take one of their courses in my Freshman year. After taking Asian Women in the U.S, even though I identify as an Asian American male, I found myself relating to a lot of the struggles that were being talked about in class. I used to keep all these things to myself as I did not have the safe space to share with others. But I found that in the Asian American Studies courses. Every class I took helped me to dive deeper into my past, my parents' past, the past of Asian Americans, and find my identity within it. By being more in touch with being Asian American, in general, I found myself joining clubs like the Vietnamese Student Association and working for the Asian American Student Success Program. All of that would not have been possible if it were not for my sister encouraging me to follow her footsteps and take classes about people like me.

Eventually, I would like to work in Human Services—something that would revolve around Psychology or being a Social Worker. I believe that having a program-of-study in Asian American Studies will make me more culturally competent for any Asian American clients that I have. I will be able to relate with and educate them as well as non-Asian Americans, if need be. I would also like to stay connected with the Asian American Studies Program in any way possible. Whether that be going back to be a panelist or a guest speaker in a class or other possibilities, it would be an honor to do so.

Jaely Cailin Pereira

Before college, I was a shy girl from a small town filled with Eurocentric pressures and ideals that were the “unsaid” rules of the town. Within my experience in that small town, I always knew there was more. I always knew there was more to my own identity that I would never know until I left my town. My ties to the Indigenous community in Massachusetts were silenced, especially after losing my grandparents, who were my only connection to that community. My identity as a Latina was always so hazy, feeling a deep connection to both my Brazilian and Azorean heritages, but never learning more. I always felt like something was missing, and I yearned to learn more.

When I was young, I would occasionally visit family members in Boston. One vision I had whenever I thought of driving into the city was a tall tan building visible from the highway. There was something like a gazebo on top, with yellow, green, and red colorings. This vision was familiar, like a photographic memory that I could always recognize and look forward to seeing again.

Coming to UMass Boston, I had no friends, no one from my high school. I was alone, in a school an hour away from me, with nothing but my backpack and my car parked in a crowded lot a long shuttle ride away. I had met a few people from orientation, but I never thought those people would be the same friends who would save me a seat in class if I were late. Those friendship bonds I created and held for the past four years have led me here, today, graduating from this program.



Being commuter students, we often looked at restaurants outside of the peninsula as our best options. My friends, Rui and Duy, knew the restaurants in Chinatown and suggested we go to a place called “Hot Pot Buffet”. This day opened my eyes to the importance of food as a way to gather in the Asian community. From here, we went to different restaurants in Chinatown or the local area of Malden and Medford. I learned about my friends’ cultures, the dishes they hold close with childhood memories, and their home languages when ordering food. Food became our own way of creating community. I will forever be grateful for my friends and the patience they had when trying to teach me how to order in different languages or educate me about why they held certain traditions. They allowed me to ask things I was too shy to ask anyone else. Their friendship made me feel like part of a family.

Rui, Duy, Wai, Charbel, and Janrey – thank you all for giving me insight into your identities and helping me learn what I know today. I am fortunate for your friendships and our conversations.

The first class I had in Asian American Studies was AsAmSt 250G: Rise Up! Asian American Leadership and Social Change taught by Loan Dao. That course, and hearing about the program of study in Asian American Studies, opened a door for me. Being a biology major on a pre-medical track, I wasn’t led to believe that taking up a minor in any way was possible or beneficial to my future goals. I was discouraged, in fact, from doing so in order to graduate “on time”. But I was too determined. I loved my first Asian American Studies class, bonded with my professor and classmates, and knew it could not be my last course. After planning out my final two years on sticky notes on a wall, I knew I could make it work. The next day I applied to be a part of the program and never looked back.

The Asian American Studies Program felt like a home, and I was part of a connected community, even outside of UMass Boston. Many of my professors became my mentors, as I spoke with them about the challenges I was facing, and they would support me in both my academics and on a personal level. Out of my six courses for the program-of-study, five were taught by and had teaching assistants who were Asian American women who often felt like older sisters or aunts to me. These connections made me comfortable with asking questions or knowing that the advice I was getting was from the lens of another woman of color, which was non-existent in the classes I took for my biology major track. All their advice and insights have shaped me to be who I am today, and I will never forget them or their teachings.

Loan, Noor, Son Ca, Linh, Lakshmi, Shirley, Ammany, Nia, and Kim – thank you for all that you do and the impact you made on my life.

Though I was quite confused about how to connect the two pieces of my undergraduate degree, Asian American Studies and Pre-Med biology, I found the perfect combination through the Asian American Psychology class. I saw the importance of mental health care for all Asian Americans, especially Asian American youth. With this, I had also noticed how calm and connected my friends had felt to my sister's dog, Luna, given how gentle she was. I realized that I could pursue the direction of animal-assisted therapy and concentrate my service to Asian American communities, especially Asian American youth, working to destigmatize mental health illness.

With this newfound passion placed on my heart, I served as a co-trip leader for the Beacon Voyages for Service program through the Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement this year. With a team of ten participants, I used my knowledge from Asian American Studies classes to educate the team about parts of the Asian American experience and why mental health illness is so prevalent, yet still so stigmatized. This BVS trip made a full circle moment for me, as I reconnected with the Networking Association of Vietnamese Americans (NOVA), who had presented to my AsAmSt 250G class two years earlier, to meet with my 2021 BVS trip participants.

Jenny, Winnie, Reina, Kelly, Xiaochuan, Isobel, Neil, Jasmine, Vivian, and Shanarah – thank you all for being participants on a trip that helped me further discover my passions. Your dedication and curiosity to learn more and serve the community has inspired me.

Peter and David – Thank you for helping me and Janrey to create the trip that we had envisioned and connecting us to so many incredible community members in the Boston area.

I will never forget the first time I drove from campus to Chinatown with my friends. As I took the exit from the highway, I recognized what I saw from my Boston childhood vision. On top of a building, was a Chinese pavilion colored in red, green, and yellow. Underneath was a line of large red letters, spelling the words "Welcome to Chinatown". I was hit with a wave of emotions. Everything felt like it was falling into place, and I felt like I belonged and was on my path of purpose. I continue to remember this specific moment in my

journey through Asian American Studies and my graduation. It reminds me of where I started, how much I have grown, and how much growth and learning I must continue to do to better serve the community.

Though words are hard to encapsulate my gratitude, I will be forever thankful that I was fortunate enough to be able to be a part of this program. This program has made me more curious to pursue learning about my own identities, and continue learning about a community that took me in as their own and showered me with love when I had no one.

Zhihang Wen (文志航)

Started from the BOTTOM, now we HERE...

I first heard this song when I was in my high school ESL class. And now, I am here.



My name is 文志航 (Zhihang Wen). I am from Guangdong, China. For me to finally be able to write these words, it has been a *long* journey. Nine years of immigrant life helped me to become a mature person. I learned a lot.

Here is my journey. From China to the US, I learned “immigrant.” From a student to a part-time restaurant worker, I learned “immigrant life.” From high school to UMass Boston, I learned “Asian American.” I experienced a lot. Words can’t tell, but the wrinkles on my face don’t lie. Yet, the moment I wrote these words, I felt like everything was worth it.

I believe I have been successful in school because the faculty, staff, and students in the Asian American Studies Program helped me along my educational journey. Three years ago, Sophia brought me to Professor Shirley’s class, AsAmSt 497 Teaching and Learning in Asian American Studies, and that was my turning point. From Shirley, I learned about the Asian American Studies Program, and I learned more about this idea: “connection.”

Through this class, I had the opportunity to visit Oakland, California, where I presented at the Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education conference. From my experiences in Oakland, I know there are people in the community who are willing to help Asians become successful.

The following semester, I took Southeast Asians in the U.S. with Shirley, and I learned more about Vietnamese refugees and their traumas from the Vietnam War. I also took Cambodian American Culture and Community with Kim, and I learned about the terrifying bombs that were dropped on Cambodia. Through Peter, I learned about Mt. Hope Cemetery, where our ancestors were buried without their names. Because of this program, I found meaning in “community” and my identity as an Asian American.

Here is my future journey. It is going to be a new chapter after leaving UMass Boston. I am planning to visit my home country. I am still thinking about where I should go and where I should stay. But there is no doubt that the knowledge I gained from the Asian American Studies Program is going to reap endless benefits.

I love this program, and I love the people in the program. No matter where I go, or where I work, I know that I will always have another home in room W-2-97 at UMass Boston—a home that is always full of people, full of joy.

Maybe this is what I have found most meaningful from that first AsAmSt 497 class: 饮水思源.

Started from the BOTTOM, now we HERE.

I won’t forget where I’ve been.

Jin R. Weng (翁锦润)

I am a 1.8 generation Taishanese American, born in Taishan, Guangdong province of China. I immigrated to Boston with my mom and sister when I was 4. Chinatown has been my home ever since we settled here. In May, I am graduating with a major in political science and a program-of-study in Asian American Studies.



When I came to UMass Boston, I felt lost. It wasn't until I enrolled in Professor Kiang's Boston's Asian American Communities where I found a place of belonging. Never had I ever thought I would be taking a class focusing on homes. I had never thought to view Chinatown and other neighborhoods through critical eyes, in terms of space, voice, and rights. What these places mean for their community, and what is needed to preserve the neighborhoods. That first class left me desiring to learn more.

I came to appreciate that Asian American Studies values our experiences and our understanding. I felt validated that many share similar experiences and struggles as me, like what it means to grow up as an immigrant in America. I came to appreciate all of our reflections in class to help connect us with others to find common humanity.

Most of all, I enjoy learning about the Asians who came before me. I felt a personal connection to the early Chinese settlers. Not only the stories and history of their contributions, struggles, and sacrifices but that

they shared a similar place of origin as me: Taishan. They laid the foundation for future generations like my family to walk upon. Without them, we might not be here.

Knowing that, I am proud of who I am. I feel a sense of responsibility to share Asian American history with others. To ensure that the progress is made and avoid repeating the past.

For the future, I want to incorporate my knowledge of US history, Asian American history, and political science to improve the Asian American community. I am very fortunate to be able to take Asian American Studies courses. I am eternally grateful for the mentors and friends whom I have met and got to know in this journey.

Recognizing Graduate Student Contributions

Parmita Gurung (पारमीता गुरुङ) (they/she), M.Ed., Elementary Education



Namaste! I am a 1.8 generation Nepali American immigrant educator and artist. I hold a B.A. in Sociology and a program of study in Asian American Studies. This year, I am graduating from UMass Boston's Teach Next Year (TNY) master's program in Elementary Education with Massachusetts General Education teacher licensure and additional licensure in Special Education, Moderate Disabilities (SPED), and English as a Second Language (ESL).

Currently, I teach 4th grade in the Boston Public Schools. I am committed to decolonizing education by cultivating culturally relevant classrooms. I teach to enable BIPOC students to recognize the beauty and power they hold within and engage students' thinking about justice and the disruption of oppression. My

focus on anti-bias/anti-racist pedagogy, trauma-informed teaching, and restorative justice practices move me to support diverse youth in a holistic approach while expecting excellence from every student. My teaching philosophy has everything to do with my experience in Asian American Studies and my activism background in the Boston Nepali community.

Jumpstarting my teaching career in the birthplace of public education amid a double pandemic of COVID-19 and racial violence has been remarkably demanding. Between remote teaching, learning, and isolation, I felt my creativity and my identity strip away from me. So, when I got the opportunity to continue my work with the Digital Storytelling Team in Asian American Studies, I was over the moon. We have many new and exciting projects coming up, including a multi-lingual, intergenerational children's storybook that addresses this double pandemic experienced by Asian American communities. For too long, I've experienced and bore witness to many injustices in the education system. For too long, people in power have gotten away without any accountability. I will not be silenced. I am confident in my purpose, and I am teaching, learning, creating for justice.

Nao Hang-Robertson, M.A., Global Governance and Human Security



My name is Nao Hang-Robertson. I am Hmong and grew up in Wisconsin. I am in the MA Global Governance and Human Security (GGHS) program. My focus draws on the Hmong ethnic minority's emphasis on gender, minority rights, and human security. My capstone study was on "The Absence of Human Security for the Hmong People in Thailand", particularly concerning how Hmong families are pressured to change their surnames in exchange for collective rights and opportunities in Thailand. My next plan is to work with the vulnerable community and find an opportunity to grow my career.

My connection to the Asian American Studies Program at UMB began as I reached out to professors who have similar interests to my work. I contacted Dr. Shirley Tang to take one of her courses for my graduate elective. Instead, we designed an independent study focusing on the

Hmong community in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. I completed a bilingual oral history study with three individual Hmong community members about their experiences coming to the United States and their livelihoods in MA. I also spoke to students in AsAmSt 225 to share my project and my own background.

Pratna Kem, M.A., English



My journey through my graduate experience has been quite the process, and there are many things that I am feeling in this moment as I have finally finished. However, more than anything else, I am just simply grateful. I am grateful for that fateful day when my childhood friend, Jimmy Lal, randomly ran into me and *ba* on the UMass Boston shuttle bus and took us straight to Dr. Peter Kiang's Asian American Studies class. I am grateful for Peter's unconditional mentorship, care, and support from that moment forward. I am grateful for the Asian American Studies Program where I have met so many mentors—Dr. Ping-Ann Addo, Dr. Chris Fung, Dr. Esther Iwanaga, Dr. Jon Iftikar, Dr. Sam Museus, Dr. Patricia Neilson, Dr. Rajini Srikanth, Dr. Karen Suyemoto, Dr. Shirley Tang, and Dr. Paul Watanabe—and I am grateful that their commitment to their passion and work has provided for me the incredible privilege of an unbelievable ethnic studies education. I am grateful for my peers in the Asian American Studies Program who have become some of my dearest friends and whose patience with me throughout the years have helped me to grow beyond anything I could have imagined. I am grateful for Dr. Patricia Neilson who watched over me as I took my first steps into AANAPISI work. I am grateful for her thoughtful guidance through the years, her wisdom, and her fire to continue to fight for what she believes in—through her I am inspired and have made a lifelong friend.

To Sara, Frances, Karen, Erica, Mai, Saty, and all of our students, thank you all for your support through one of the most ridiculously challenging years of my career and education. Your support throughout our time together in the Asian American Student Success Program has allowed me to be the best of myself.

To the class of 2021, congratulations! We out!

Alyssa Jasmine Moir, M.S., Rehabilitation Counseling

I was born in Boston, MA while my parents are from two different continents. My father is from Europe- London, England and my mother is from Asia- Pak Phanang, Nakhonsithammarat district in Thailand. Once I tell others about my background, the most common responses I get is “really, you are mixed” or you don’t look “Asian.” Each time I know it’s not the first or last time I will hear this.

I received my bachelor’s degree in 2016 from UMass Boston with a major in Psychology and program-of-study in Asian American Studies. I learned so much from the Asian American Studies Program. It was so different from any of the other classes I was taking. I got to learn more about history, stereotypes etc. I felt so connected to what I was learning. I enjoyed my undergraduate years at UMB, I made meaningful connections, lasting friendships, and amazing experiences.

I started my master’s degree program in 2018 and am graduating in clinical rehabilitation counseling with eligibility for a license in mental health. Peter Kiang originally informed me about this program. Rehabilitation counselors help individuals with a variety of different disabilities to develop the necessary supports to improve their wellbeing, gain employment or become more independent. During my final year, I was fortunate to intern with a grant-funded program that focuses on working with survivors of trauma. I learned a great deal from this program. Trauma-focused counseling can be very intense and survivors of trauma all have different healing processes. It is important to be mindful when providing counseling and also to be able to practice self-care. After graduating, I will be looking for a position that focuses on survivors of trauma or that serves children and adolescents who are experiencing mental health emergencies or needing stabilization in the home.

Throughout graduate school, I learned the importance of being aware of ourselves and our biases. I hope to help others reach their full potential as I continue to gain more experience working with diverse populations including Asians/Asian Americans. During the current pandemic, it is difficult to see how individuals can so easily make assumptions about someone’s background and attack them physically or verbally. These experiences that Asians/Asian Americans are going through are traumatic. In the work I have done with individuals with trauma, sometimes the people involved in their lives do not fully understand their experiences. I hope to continue to do work as a therapist to help provide psychoeducation and to provide accurate information to help address racism and stereotypes.



AsAmSt Program Sampling from 2020-2021 - Faculty/Student Work



- The transnational South Asian American family: Kamala Harris with her sister Maya and extended family in India

Students in Prof. Lakshmi Srinivas's AsAmSt 226 Becoming South Asians courses in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 produced many fresh projects on a wide range of local, national, and transnational topics.

Sample topics focused on issues and dynamics of immigrant family life, patterns and motivations of reverse migration, musical styles and cultural identities, community news and media representations, and supermarket-based family models of entrepreneurship.

Linguistic diversity among South Asian Americans

Cultural and ethnic diversity takes many forms, and it is important to recognize non-visual forms of diversity and ethnicity, such as language, and to tune our senses to aural diversity

हिंदी बांग्ला हिन्दुस्तानी
 गाल्नि गुद्वइया विंतना पंजाबी पंजाबी
 தமிழ்
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Joined by Honors College Dean, Rajini Srikanth, Yayin He and Janrey Javier presented AsAmSt thesis projects in May 2021 on “Chinese Immigrant Leadership” and “How do



Massachusetts Public Higher Education Institutions Support Asian American Leadership Development?”

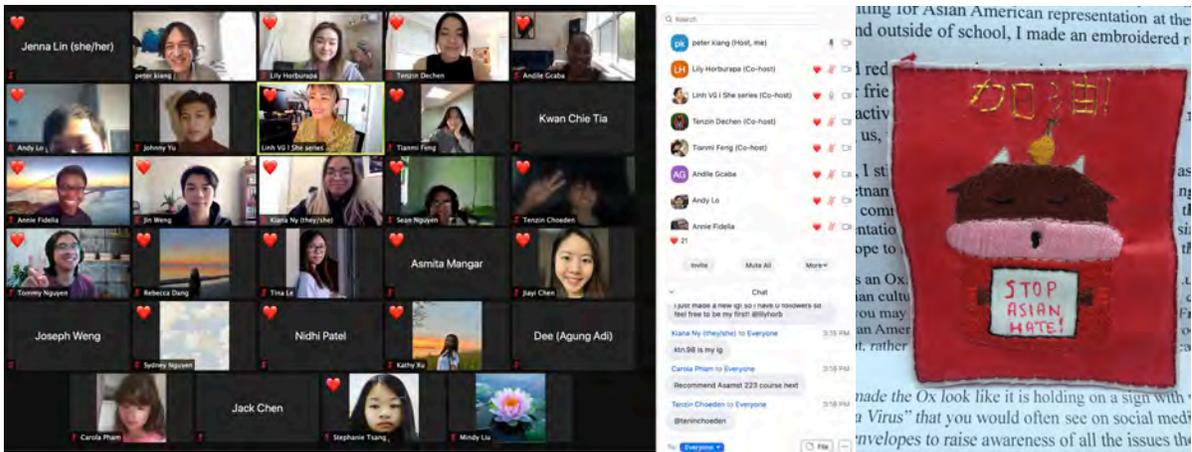
AsAmSt 270 Cambodian American Culture and Community, taught remotely by Kim Soun Ty in Fall 2020, had its largest-ever enrollment of Khmer/Khmer American-identified students. In this screenshot, former 270 teaching assistant, កនពេញសំណង់ (Penhsamnang Kan), joins the 270 class as a guest filmmaker to share her master's capstone project, "Three Generations of Cambodian Men in the Diaspora." As the video is playing, Jenny Ngeth's grandfather hears the Khmer language and becomes curious about the video project. 270 student Jenny eagerly invites Grandpa to join our class. Grandpa watches the video and joins us in a bilingual discussion afterwards. Grandpa shares his reflections on the video and his experiences with aging and health complications while 270 alumna and current teaching assistant Darlene Yin, Khmer Culture Association Co-Presidents Nakra Ath-Ly (270 alum) and Samoanna Pang (270 student), and 270 student Andy Rath listen carefully. Other 270 students excitedly share their encouragements for grandpa in the chat box. In week 2, the class had opened with the Khmer proverb: ងើយស្តុក ឌីនដាក់គ្រាប់



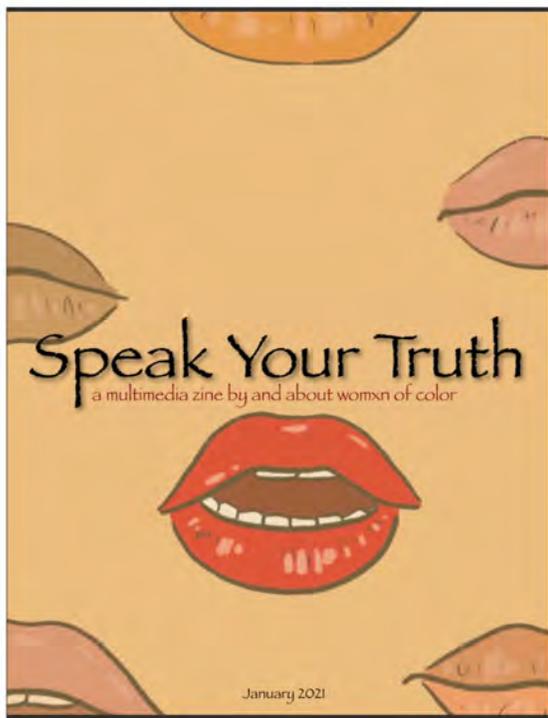
(the immature rice stalk stands erect, while the mature stalk, heavy with grain, bends over). Indeed, students put this into practice each week of the fall semester. Much appreciation to Jenny for engaging grandpa and to Bong Samnang for always supporting 270 even while now living back home in Cambodia.



While maintaining her community arts leadership role, Ngoc-Tran Vu (right) taught AsAmSt 228 Asian Women in the US, and Pratna Kem led AsAmSt 250G Rise Up: Asian American Leadership and Social Change. Many community presenters interacted with each course during both semesters, including acclaimed, California-based Khmer American documentary filmmaker, Mike Siv, in AsAmSt 250G (left).



AsAmSt 200 Intro to Asian American Studies students emoted heartily for their Teaching Assistants, led by Linh-Phuong Vũ with Lily Horburapa, Tianmi Feng and Tenzin Dechen. Cara Lew in AsAmSt 397 hand-crafted red envelopes of care with ox-led solidarity messages for local community leaders.

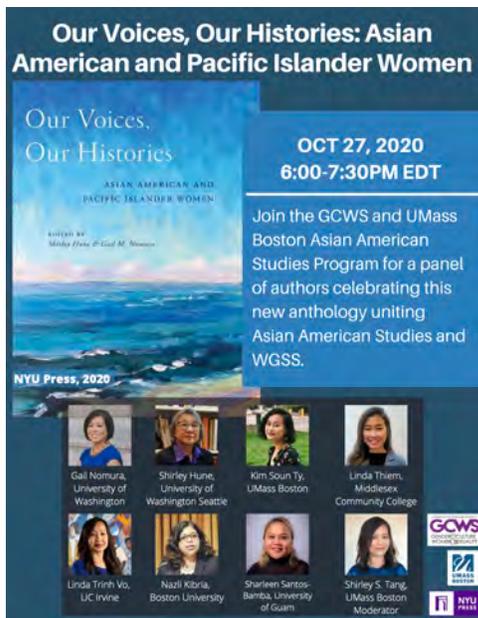


Working closely with Ammany Ty and Nia Duong of the AANAPISI-supported Digital Storytelling in Asian American Studies team, advanced students in Shirley Tang's AsAmSt 398 Applied Research in Asian American Studies, Layanie Oscar, Jaely Pereira, Kirsteen Raboy, and Celine Voyard, co-produced: *Speak Your Truth - a multimedia zine by and about womxn of color* and presented at a campus launch in Dec 2020. With art, poetry, music, essays, reviews, and reflections on decolonizing the mind, womxn of color leadership, traditional healing recipes, and much more, the zine is accessible online via: <https://indd.adobe.com/view/52103736-8ec3-4f46-93a9-4982829e73cc>

AsAmSt Alumni Representing



Cirque du Soleil star Alex Woo ('16) in March 2021 with a newly-created Pop Doll of his Axel character; U.S. Marine Corps veteran Vu Tran ('15) posting in May 2021 what needs to be defended again and again; gowned-up Megan Truong in her Pfizer clinical manufacturing facility in Feb 2021, taking COVID samples to be sent to exterior labs for approval.



Kim Soun Ty ('14, '17) and Linda Thiem ('14, '16) shared their book chapter, co-authored with Shirley Tang, "Stories and Visions Across Generations: Khmer American Women," at a celebration co-sponsored with NYU Press and the Consortium for Graduate Studies in Gender, Culture, Women and Sexuality.

Seven AsAmSt alumni co-led a curriculum development workshop for 20 Boston Public Schools (BPS) teachers during a week-long training for BPS by UMass Boston's ethnic studies institutes. The alumni were all former BPS students, each with much to say about the impacts of their AsAmSt education and the lack of such opportunities in their K-12 experiences. Son Ca Lâm (above), Kim Soun Ty, Chu Huang, Tomás Leyton-Nolan, Van Tran, Tommy Nguyen, and Ammany Ty shared powerful *testimonios* and sample AsAmSt digital stories which referenced BPS issues from their own life experiences.

AsAmSt/AANAPISI Student and Administrative Campus Leadership

Using the Beacon Voyages for Service (BVS) platform under the Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement (OSLCE), Jaely Pereira and Janrey Javier led an alternative Spring Break 2021 community immersion experience for a dedicated, multi-ethnic team of ten predominantly Asian American students focusing on Asian American community mental health issues and interventions. Originally planned to bring students to significant Asian American community sites in the CA Bay Area, this service initiative needed to be completely redesigned due to COVID-19.

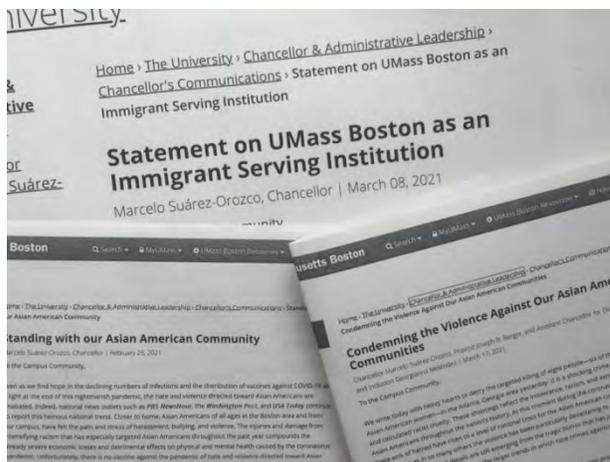


To everyone's horror and outrage, the metro Atlanta murders of eight individuals, including six Asian and Asian American women, occurred on March 16th, the Tuesday of Spring Break week as BVS was already underway. Jaely and Janrey were able to pull everyone together and triage the remainder of the BVS week not only to follow-through on agreed-upon service commitments (as shown above with photos from PAMANA), but to actualize support and care for the well-being of the BVS student participants as they collectively responded to the killings, the 24-hour news coverage, the resemblance of the immigrant women to their own mothers or aunts, and other dynamics of anger, loss, and injustice.

In addition, Janrey and Jaely, in their campus leadership roles as elected President and Vice President of UMass Boston's Undergraduate Student Government, issued two major statements jointly with the Asian Student Center Coordinator, Huy "Johnny" Vuong, on Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month and on Anti-Asian American & Pacific Islander Hate. In part, they called in campus leadership to address a set of eleven agenda items to "support the Asian American community and accurately represent their experiences within announcements and events, administrative conversations and decisions, and institutional policies and structures":

March 30th, 2021

- Continue the commitment of becoming a leading anti-racist and health-promoting public research university with a conversation series on the Model Minority Myth and ideals like Yellow Peril.
- Address the Model Minority Myth within diversity training for faculty, staff, and administrators
- Include, acknowledge, and disaggregate different ethnic groups of the Asian diaspora within the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning, such as Retention and Graduation data, and other university related research
- Create culturally relevant healing spaces for Asian American and International students to access within the Counseling Center and elsewhere on campus
- Relieve language barriers for Asian American and International students within the Counseling Center and other front-line service units by hiring multilingual staff
- Hire more Asian American counselors within the Counseling Center
- Acknowledge significant holidays celebrated by diverse Asian communities that are not based on the Western solar calendar within university, division, and department communications
- Acknowledge May as Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month within university, division, and department communications as is done annually by federal and state institutions
- Replace the full-time faculty line in the Asian American Studies Program which has already been empty for two years
- Amplify outreach and exposure of resources available to Asian American students from the Asian American Success Program, Asian American Studies Program, and the Institute for Asian American Studies to Asian American students
- Continue engaging with and supporting local Asian American organizations and businesses by reallocating university funds as well as sponsoring and co-hosting events



Independently, Chancellor Marcelo Suárez-Orozco with Provost Joseph Berger also released several significant statements in February-March 2021 to articulate explicit institutional commitments from UMass Boston, including: “Standing with our Asian American Community,” “Condemning the Violence Against Our-Asian American Communities,” and being an “Immigrant-Serving Institution”.

https://www.umb.edu/the_university/chancellor/communications/standing_with_our_asian_american_community

https://www.umb.edu/the_university/chancellor/communications/condemning_the_violence_against_our_asian_american_communities

https://www.umb.edu/the_university/chancellor/communications/statement_on_umb_boston_as_an_immigrant_serving_institution

Each of these documents now serves as an important reference for future agenda-building, advocacy, assessment, and accountability on behalf of Asian American constituencies at UMass Boston.

Fresh Lessons with Pandemic Purpose from Mt. Hope Cemetery

On the final day of the remote Spring 2021 semester, students in AsAmSt 423 Boston's Asian American Communities met each other in-person for the first time through an optional field trip to the City of Boston's historic Chinese burial grounds in Mt. Hope Cemetery.

Outside with masks and social distance, students shared pandemic-informed reflections while offering oranges and incense to Boston's pioneering Asian American generations as well as to Ms. Feng Daoyou (馮道友) and others.



Of the six Asian women murdered in metro Atlanta on 16 March 2021, Ms. Feng was the only one who had no family members or close friends in the U.S. She was laid to rest on 4 April 2021 at a Georgia cemetery near where she worked, thanks to the efforts of Atlanta's Chinese American Alliance.

Hundreds of AsAmSt students have previously tended to Mt. Hope's Chinese burial grounds since 1993 when the first field trip took place in the same AsAmSt 423 course. The inequalities of race, language, culture, and class—in death as well as in life—for the pioneering generation of Boston's Asian immigrant workers, many of whom died from tuberculosis, a lung-attacking disease spread through the air, show themselves fully at Mt. Hope, where we continue to reflect and remember those who came before us.

The Asian American Studies Program recognizes with appreciation:

- all current and former AsAmSt students and their family members who have played *essential* roles in providing care, security, sustenance, and support for all of us.
- all AsAmSt faculty, staff, teaching assistants, enrolled students, and guest presenters, including many alumni, who adjusted to mandatory modes of remote teaching & learning, while simultaneously addressing disparate impacts on health, mental health, economic survival, and daily threats of physical harm and racist attack against our families and communities.
- alumni and community partners as well as faculty including Paul Watanabe, Shirley Tang, Marlene Kim, Karen Suyemoto, Andrew Leong, Peter Kiang, and many others who have provided exhaustive, albeit exhausting, expert commentary throughout the year on critical headline issues ranging from anti-Asian violence, racism and Asian American mental health, the history of Asian Americans in Massachusetts, Chinatown and Fields Corner business losses, Asian American immigrant worker unemployment and housing displacement, the exclusion of Asian American Studies content in public K-12 education, and Asian American community resilience for media outlets ranging from the Boston Globe and Washington Post to Time Magazine, Associated Press, WGBH, WBUR, Chronicle-WCVB-TV, WBZ-TV, etc.
- the Asian Caucus of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, including Tackey Chan, Vanna Howard, Rady Mom, Tram Nguyen, Maria Robinson, Paul Schmid, Erika Uytterhoeven, and Donald Wong for their targeted legislative leadership.
- Andy Choi, Karen Suyemoto, and the Psychology Department for ensuring AsAmSt/PSYCH 238L Asian American Psychology in Spring 2021; Karen received the 2021 Outstanding Teaching & Mentoring Award from the American Psychological Association Division 9 Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.
- Bob Chen, Cedric Woods, Ngai Kwan, and colleagues from the School for the Environment, Institute for New England Native American Studies, and Institute for Community Inclusion, for fruitful grant collaborations during 2020-2021 and beyond.
- everyone involved with our US Department of Education-funded AANAPISI Program activities, including co-PIs Peter Kiang, Paul Watanabe, and Shirley Tang; Vice Provosts Liya Escalera and Joan Becker, Asian American Student Success Program staff led by Sara Boxell with Pratna Kem, Frances Chow, Karen Chi, and Erica Lam, and our sister AANAPISI leaders at Bunker Hill Community College, including President Pam Eddinger, Faculty Project Director, Maria Puente, and Activity Director, Aurora Bautista.
- all who reached out with support, solidarity, and understanding, particularly among our colleagues of color.
- each of our 2020-2021 donors who provided much-needed, much-valued support of all kinds at all levels.

Please visit UMB's Asian American Studies Program at www.umb.edu/asamst. For updates of local community news, resources, and events, see: <http://www.facebook.com/UMB.AsAmSt>. Please consider contributing to the Asian American Studies Program Capacity Fund: <http://www.alumni.umb.edu/AsAmSt30>.